

@connect

News and events from Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust.



Welcome to e-connect!

Spring is upon us with the days getting longer and the weather getting warmer!

This week has seen the announcement of a four stage plan in England to remove the restrictions put in place by the government. Although this is exciting news for many of us, we cannot become complacent and must continue to stay safe and adhere to the rules that are still in place until they are lifted.

We hope this news will soon mean the return of our volunteers, many of whom have been shielding or are unable to join us on our wards as we adhere to government guidelines. As an organisation we have been fortunate that a lot of our staff, carers, and volunteers have adapted to new ways of working with ease and so we have been able to continue to provide brilliant care throughout the pandemic, as well as extra services for our patients to try and keep them active and connected.

Throughout COVID-19, our work to roll out our Participation and involvement strategy has continued and we hope very soon we will begin to see many more people with lived experience, carers, families, volunteers join us to help continually improve our services.

Remember to have a [look at our vacancies](#) if you are thinking of changing job, a step up or part time opportunities - we are ever expanding our KMPT workforce and new roles are advertised regularly, so keep checking!

For now, keep staying safe!

Community Mental Health Survey 2021

We will soon be carrying out a survey to find out what service users think about their care. This is part of a national programme to improve quality of care and service users' experiences.

Your views are important to us and taking part in the survey is voluntary and all your answers are confidential.

If you are selected to take part, your contact details (name and postal address) will be used by researchers to carry out the survey.

If you do not want to take part, or have any questions about the survey, please contact the Community mental health survey support team on 07979 894379 or kmpt.patient.experience@nhs.net.

Ross' campaign to raise awareness of Encephalitis

The 22 February was World Encephalitis day. To mark this occasion we spoke to Ross Buggins about this extraordinary battle and how he's using his own experiences to support others.

Six years ago, Ross Buggins, Software development manager with KMPT, was badly affected by Encephalitis. Encephalitis is inflammation of the brain, which affects 500,000 people globally each year. Ross had a long period before his final diagnosis and there are still many people who don't fully understand Encephalitis symptoms.

Since his diagnosis of Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis, he and his family have been campaigning to raise awareness of the crippling condition alongside the charity The Encephalitis Society. The best account of the situation Ross was experiencing comes from his mum, who has written a [blog](#) detailing what it was from her perspective and notes she had written during her son's illness. Her blog does not include all the experiences that Ross' dad, sister, younger brother and all of his friends went through and witnessed. They each have their own story; however it was the knowledge and love for Ross that kept them all going and to get the best possible care for him.

Ross's symptoms started as sickness and a rash, followed by depression and anxiety that developed into psychosis over a period of four months. Clinicians battled the mental health symptoms, and for his own safety he was then sectioned for three months under the Mental Health Act. Only when he fell into comotisis, and then at the request of a sleep specialist consultant, was he transferred to a neurology ward; and finally diagnosed and treated for encephalitis.

The condition, like in Ross' case, is often misdiagnosed and mimics other illnesses. Infectious encephalitis frequently begins with a 'flu-like illness or headache. Typically more serious symptoms follow hours to days later. The most serious finding is an alteration in level of consciousness. This can range from mild confusion or drowsiness, to loss of consciousness, seizures and coma.

Ross is now using his experience to raise aware of Encephalitis. Find out more by reading his mum's blog and join Ross next year to shine a light for The Encephalitis Society and all those affected.



[Find out more about Encephalitis here](#)



Tommy's new partnership to support mothers with serious mental illness

UK pregnancy charity Tommy's has partnered with NHS England, Public Health England and King's College London to improve support for women who may get pregnant while managing a serious mental illness (SMI).

Up to 1 in 5 women have mental health problems during pregnancy and after birth, with depression and anxiety affecting 10-15 per cent of pregnancies. Many of the 551,000 people in the UK currently managing SMI are women who may be trying to conceive, or at risk of unplanned pregnancy, which could leave them vulnerable. Expectant and new mums with SMI are at higher risk of physical and mental health issues – for example, mothers diagnosed with bipolar or schizoaffective disorder are much more likely to develop post-partum psychosis.

Despite the need to carefully manage their SMI going into pregnancy, studies have shown that up to 90% of women will stop taking medication for an existing mental health problem when they stop contraception or when they discover they are pregnant. Although done with good intentions for fear of affecting the baby's health, this often happens without talking to a health professional beforehand, which can have serious consequences such as causing a relapse.

Experts from Tommy's and KCL have teamed up with health authorities at NHSE and PHE to help women with SMI make informed decisions around when to get pregnant and how to treat their condition during pregnancy. Together the organisations have developed a new online information and support hub for anyone with SMI planning a pregnancy, as well as practical guidance for the frontline healthcare professionals who support them. The charity also updated its Planning for Pregnancy tool so preconception health advice is tailored for SMI.

Similarly to Tommy's work, here at KMPT we are involved in the PATH project, which aims to support women, their partners and families during the perinatal period. The team is helping to create a website which will house lots of information, support and help for families and healthcare professionals on the topic of perinatal mental illness. We will keep you updated as the project progresses.

[Find out more about Tommy's here](#)

Apprenticeship opportunities - Natasha Brown is the first legal

apprentice at KMPT

Natasha Brown is our award-winning Apprentice of the Year and according to specialist training provider Damar Training, KMPT is the first NHS trust they know to employ a legal apprentice.

Natasha, who is a Paralegal apprentice, has been working with our legal services team for almost two years now. The team provides in-house legal advice for the Trust and staff including claims and inquests. Natasha's role consists of legal research, liaising with internal clients, external solicitors, team organisation and managing files.

She has certainly been a trailblazer and here she talks about why she decided to do an apprenticeship with us.

Natasha said: "I liked the idea of learning on the job and getting that hands on experience that would better my understanding of the law and my studies. I had done my own independent research on apprenticeships and other options after finishing my A-Levels and I decided that this was the best fit for me personally. Every day I learn something different, which enables me to challenge myself. I have real-life examples to refer back to and can apply to my learning and legal studies with Damar."

Natasha's biggest achievement was winning the Apprentice of the Year Award. Natasha was nominated by her line manager Nicola Legge, Legal services coordinator, for her commitment to her role and learning. The KMPT Awards recognise so many brilliant people working tirelessly to achieve our strategy and goals as an organisation. The Apprentice of the Year Award highlights the exceptional contributions apprentices have made to their workplace and how they have used every opportunity to learn and shape their journey in the NHS and at KMPT. Natasha was nominated for taking on new challenges without questions and is now sharing her knowledge and skills with other teams. She continues to flourish and has become an integral part of the legal services team by taking on tasks that demand challenge.

Natasha said: "Winning this award came as a real shock to me as there are so many deserving winners. I am very thankful for being nominated and making it through the various stages to achieve the award. It has given me more motivation to succeed in every aspect of my job and future career after completing my apprenticeship. I have achieved a lot of personal goals by passing exams and I enjoy learning whilst doing a job that I love."

Natasha wants to continue a career in legal services as she loves the range of areas of law that are covered. We certainly agree that she has a bright legal career ahead of her.



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